

Joint Ground and Riverine Operations

8



Situation in Northeastern Manchuria

While the Trans-Baikal and 1st Far Eastern Fronts conducted major operations against eastern and western Manchuria to destroy the Japanese Kwantung Army, the 2d Far Eastern Front of Gen. M. A. Purkayev launched secondary attacks against Japanese forces in northern Manchuria. These attacks sought to tie down Japanese forces in the northern regions in order to prevent those units from reinforcing the main Japanese formations in the south. Soviet forces of the 2d Far Eastern Front faced formidable terrain obstacles. The most vexing barrier was the extensive river network separating northern Manchuria from the Soviet Maritime Provinces. Furthermore, a wide expanse of marshy terrain bordered these rivers, and mountains blocked passage south from the river and swampy region into central Manchuria.

The 2d Far Eastern Front sector stretched 2,500 kilometers from the northernmost point in Manchuria, north of Blagoveshchensk, southeast and east along the Amur River to Khabarovsk, then south along the Ussuri River to just north of Iman. Along the entire front, Soviet forces faced the imposing Amur and Ussuri rivers, both unfordable and both in the midst of water-inundated flood plains of varying widths.

This front comprised two distinct sectors, each characterized by unique terrain conditions south of the major river obstacles. In the northern half of 2d Far Eastern Front's sector, north and south of Blagoveshchensk, the Amur River had a very narrow flood plain (ten kilometers). Here the land south of the Amur River rose steeply, first into foothills of the Lesser Khingan Mountains (twenty to thirty kilometers in depth) and then into the mountains themselves. The wider (twenty to thirty kilometers) flood plain north of the river, however, presented a major obstacle to the deployment of forces. In the southern sector of 2d Far Eastern Front, west and south of Khabarovsk, were the extensive flood plains of the Amur and Ussuri rivers, stretching 100–125 kilometers south and west of the rivers.

Compounding the difficulties in this sector, the Sungari River and its tributaries with their own flood plains flowed northeastward into the Amur River.

The terrain in the southern sector was a rectangular marshy region bounded on the north by the Amur River, on the east by the Ussuri River, on the south by the Hataling Mountains and Wanta Shan, and on the west by the Lesser Khingan Mountains. This rectangle measured 300 kilometers east to west and 100 kilometers north to south.

It was across this flooded region that Purkayev's 2d Far Eastern Front chose to launch its main offensive, an attack that would have to make optimum use of the limited communication routes of the region. The major transportation artery through the region was the Sungari River, which flowed between the Lesser Khingan Mountains and the Hataling Mountains, northeast across the western half of the swampy rectangle into the Amur River. Most major towns in this area were on the east bank of the Sungari River, the largest being the river ports of Chiamussu, Fuchin, and Tungchiang. A patchwork road network paralleled the east bank, but at times of high water (July and August of each year) the roads were often flooded. Virtually no roads existed farther east into the swamplands that stretched from the Sungari River to the Ussuri River. There were also few trafficable roads in the salient formed by the Amur and Ussuri rivers. The only other population centers, the mining towns of Lienchangkou, Hsingshanchen, Hokang, and Lopei, were nestled in the eastern foothills of the Lesser Khingan Mountains from Chiamussu northward to the Amur River.

The single suitable exit route from this basin into central Manchuria was up the Sungari River to Chiamussu and through the 150-kilometer gap that the Sungari River cut through the mountains to Harbin. Terrain in this 250—300-kilometer stretch of river, swamps, and mountain passes dictated that it be a secondary attack axis. Yet, secondary or not, the Soviets had to master the terrain and overcome the Japanese who defended it.

Japanese Defenses

Japanese forces defending this sector of northern Manchuria were directly subordinate to First Area Army Headquarters. The largest defending unit was Lt. Gen. Izeki Jin's 134th Infantry Division, with headquarters at Chiamussu. Although the bulk of the division's three regiments were stationed at Chiamussu, Hsingshanchen, and Fuchin, respectively, smaller divisional elements manned outposts along the south bank of the Amur River and a series of fortified regions blocking access into the area. Small fortified regions were at Mingshanchen, Tungchiang, Chiehchingkou, and Fuyuan on the south bank of the Amur. Larger, permanent, more

formidable fortifications existed at Fenghsiang, Hsingshanchen, and Fuchin, covering the avenues of approach from Lopei to Chiamussu and up the east bank of the Sungari River.

Thirty kilometers wide and twelve kilometers deep, the Fuchin Fortified Region had two centers of resistance, one adjacent to the city itself and the other on the Wuerhkuli Shan, an imposing rocky hill mass west of the town. At Fuchin a mixed force of 1,200 Japanese and Manchurians manned 156 reinforced concrete and log pillboxes covered by more than fifty kilometers of trenches and antitank obstacles. Japanese forces in Fuchin consisted of the 2d Battalion, 367th Infantry Regiment, 134th Infantry Division; an infantry battalion from the Japanese Sungari River Flotilla; and a security battalion. In addition, the 7th Manchurian Infantry Brigade kept the bulk of its force in the city, with the remainder downriver at Tungchiang. The Japanese 2d Battalion, 366th Infantry Regiment, 134th Infantry Division, manned the Hsingshanchen Fortified Region in the hills just north of Hokang. Japanese forces and their Manchurian auxiliaries, about 25,000 men, covered the approaches to Chiamussu, concentrating their extensive fortifications on the limited number of avenues of approach through the region.¹

Missions and Tasks

The Soviet 2d Far Eastern Front opposed these Japanese forces. Its overall mission was to attack south and west across the Amur River in order to clear the Sungari River region of Japanese troops and to advance through Chiamussu to Harbin, where it would unite with forces of the 1st Far Eastern Front. Simultaneously, farther north, other front elements would clear the Aihun-Sunwu area, across the Amur River from Blagoveshchensk, and advance toward Tsitsihar to join forces with the Trans-Baikal Front.² General Purkayev ordered Lt. Gen. S. K. Mamonov's 15th Army to make the main attack:

In cooperation with two brigades of the Amur Flotilla, 15th Army will force the Amur River in the region of the mouth of the Sungari River, destroy the enemy defending the Sungarian and Fuchin Fortified Regions, and subsequently advance on Fuchin with the main force on the east bank of the Sungari. Then develop the offensive in the direction of Chiamussu and Harbin. A portion of the army forces will defend a 240 kilometer sector of the front.³

In order to accomplish this task, 15th Army had three rifle divisions, one fortified region, and three tank brigades, totaling 1,433 guns and mortars, 18 multiple rocket launchers, and 164 tanks and self-propelled guns (see table 8—1).⁴

Table 8—1. Soviet 15th Army Composition

15th Army: Lt. Gen. S. K. Mamonov
 34th Rifle Division
 361st Rifle Division
 388th Rifle Division
 4th Fortified Region
 102d Fortified Region
 165th Tank Brigade
 171st Tank Brigade
 203d Tank Brigade
 21st Tank Destroyer Brigade
 52d Gun Artillery Regiment
 145th Gun Artillery Regiment
 1120th Gun Artillery Regiment
 1121st Gun Artillery Regiment
 1637th Gun Artillery Regiment
 424th Howitzer Artillery Regiment
 1632d Tank Destroyer Artillery Regiment
 1633d Tank Destroyer Artillery Regiment
 183d Mortar Regiment
 470th Mortar Regiment
 85th Guards Mortar Regiment
 99th Guards Mortar Regiment
 73d Antiaircraft Artillery Division
 205th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
 402d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
 430th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
 442d Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
 1648th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment
 29th Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
 46th Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
 302d Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
 505th Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion
 10th Pontoon Bridge Brigade
 21st Motorized Assault Engineer Sapper Brigade
 101st Separate Engineer Battalion
 129th Separate Engineer Battalion

Weapons:
 164 tanks and self-propelled guns
 1,433 guns and mortars

Source: M. V. Zakharov, ed., *Final: istoriko-memuarny ocherk o razgrome imperialisticheskoi iapony v 1945 godu* [Finale: A historical memoir survey about the rout of imperialistic Japan in 1945] (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1969), 401—3.

General Purkayev also provided extensive artillery support to 15th Army to assist it in reducing the fortified regions in its sector. An army artillery group consisting of the 52d, 145th, and 1120th Gun Artillery Regiments cooperated with gunboats of the Amur Flotilla to provide suppressive fire on Japanese positions during the actual crossing of the Amur River. Regimental and divisional artillery groups provided reinforcing fires. A total of twelve artillery regiments, one tank destroyer brigade, one antiaircraft artillery division, one antiaircraft artillery regiment, and four antiaircraft artillery battalions supported the subsequent advance of 15th Army.⁵ Although rich in artillery, 15th Army received only limited armor assets because of poor road trafficability in the region. Front attached just three tank brigades and four self-propelled artillery battalions, for use as forward detachments to lead the advance of each rifle division and to provide direct fire support to these divisions when they engaged Japanese fortified positions.⁶ The 10th Air Army, supporting the operations of the 2d Far Eastern Front, allocated 45 percent of its assets to support the attack of 15th Army.⁷

Because 15th Army needed heavy engineer support in order to cross the Amur River and to reduce several fortified regions, front attached a full motorized assault engineer sapper brigade, two separate engineer battalions, and a pontoon bridge battalion to the army. These units built and improved roads into the army concentration area and upgraded the load-bearing capacity of bridges. Within three months, the engineers constructed 266 kilometers of roadway and repaired another 1,417 kilometers of roads. Army engineers also created three separate river crossing sectors across the Amur River and built up to twenty camouflaged observation posts in each regimental sector along the river.⁸

In order to facilitate crossing the Amur and subsequent operations up the Sungari River, the Soviet Far East Command subordinated the Amur River Flotilla to the commander of the 2d Far Eastern Front. Rear Adm. N. V. Antonov's Amur Flotilla, with headquarters in Khabarovsk, consisted of three brigades of armored cutters, gunboats, and minesweepers stationed on the Amur River, plus several smaller units operating on tributaries of the Amur River, on the Ussuri River, and on Lake Khanka.⁹ General Purkayev allocated most of this force to support 15th Army, specifically, the 1st and 2d Brigades of River Ships. He also assigned the 45th Fighter Aviation Regiment and the 10th Separate Aviation Detachment to support 15th Army's operations (see table 8—2).

Mamonov's operational plan was similar in concept to the planning of other army commanders. He selected a main attack axis up the Sungari River, but also sought to bring maximum pressure to bear on the Japanese by using virtually every feasible axis of advance in his sector. The 361st and 388th Rifle Divisions would make the army main attack in the center of the army sector. These two divisions, supported by the 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla, would cross the Amur River in the Leninskoye and

Table 8—2. Amur Flotilla Support for 15th Army

Amur Flotilla: Khabarovsk*: Rear Adm. N. V. Antonov
 1st Brigade of River Ships: Capt. 1st Rank V. A. Krinov
 Monitors: *Lenin, Krasnyi Vostok, Sun Yat Sen*
 1st Division of River Minesweepers
 1st Detachment of Armored Cutters
 5th Detachment of Armored Cutters
 1st Detachment of Cutter-Minesweepers
 2d Detachment of Cutter-Minesweepers
 1st Detachment of Mine-Cutters
 two floating batteries
 2d Brigade of River Ships: Capt. 1st Rank L. B. Tankevich
 Monitors: *Sverdlov, Dal'nevostochnyi Komsomolets*
 2d Division of River Minesweepers
 2d Detachment of Armored Cutters
 3d Detachment of Armored Cutters
 3d Detachment of Cutter-Minesweepers
 two floating batteries
 45th Fighter Aviation Regiment
 10th Separate Aviation Detachment

*8 August—deployed to Leninskoye (1st Brigade) and Nizhne-Spasskoye (2d Brigade).

Source: V. M. Bagrov and N. F. Sungorkin, *Krasno-znamennaia amurskaia flotiliia* [The Red Banner Amur Flotilla] (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1976), 155—57.

Voskresenskoye sectors, respectively. After securing the bridgeheads, the two divisions, led by the 171st Tank Brigade as forward detachment, would occupy Tungchiang, advance up the east bank of the Sungari to Fuchin, and then move southwestward along the river to Chiamussu. The 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla would cooperate with the two divisions and conduct local amphibious operations as necessary in order to compensate for the difficult overland route of the infantry and armor advance. On the army's left, the 2d Brigade of the Amur Flotilla would transport the 630th Rifle Regiment across the river from Nizhne-Spasskoye, so that it could assault Fuyuan and other Japanese strongpoints on the south bank of the Amur as far southwest as the mouth of the Sungari River. On the army's right, the 34th Rifle Division, 203d Tank Brigade, and 102d Fortified Region would, in coordination with the 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla, force the Amur River near Blagoslovennoye. Once across the river, this force would advance southward, reducing Japanese fortified positions between Lopei and Chiamussu. Ultimately, the 34th Rifle Division would join the main body of 15th Army in a coordinated attack on Chiamussu from the north and east, another pincer movement so characteristic of the Manchurian campaign.¹⁰

Late on the evening of 8 August, ground forces were in their jumping-off positions, and assault units were prepared for transport across the river. To support that assault, the 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla had displaced to Leninskoye; the 2d Brigade, to Nizhne-Spasskoye. General Mamonov established a joint command post for the 15th Army and the Amur Flotilla at Leninskoye. In addition, a floating command post and naval repair base deployed on the Amur River in 15th Army sector.¹¹ To destroy Japanese outposts on the south bank of the river, the army planned to fire a fifty-minute artillery preparation. Army air assets prepared to cover the rifle units crossing the Amur and to bomb major Japanese fortified positions, troop garrisons, and communications links to the depth of the Japanese defensive zone.

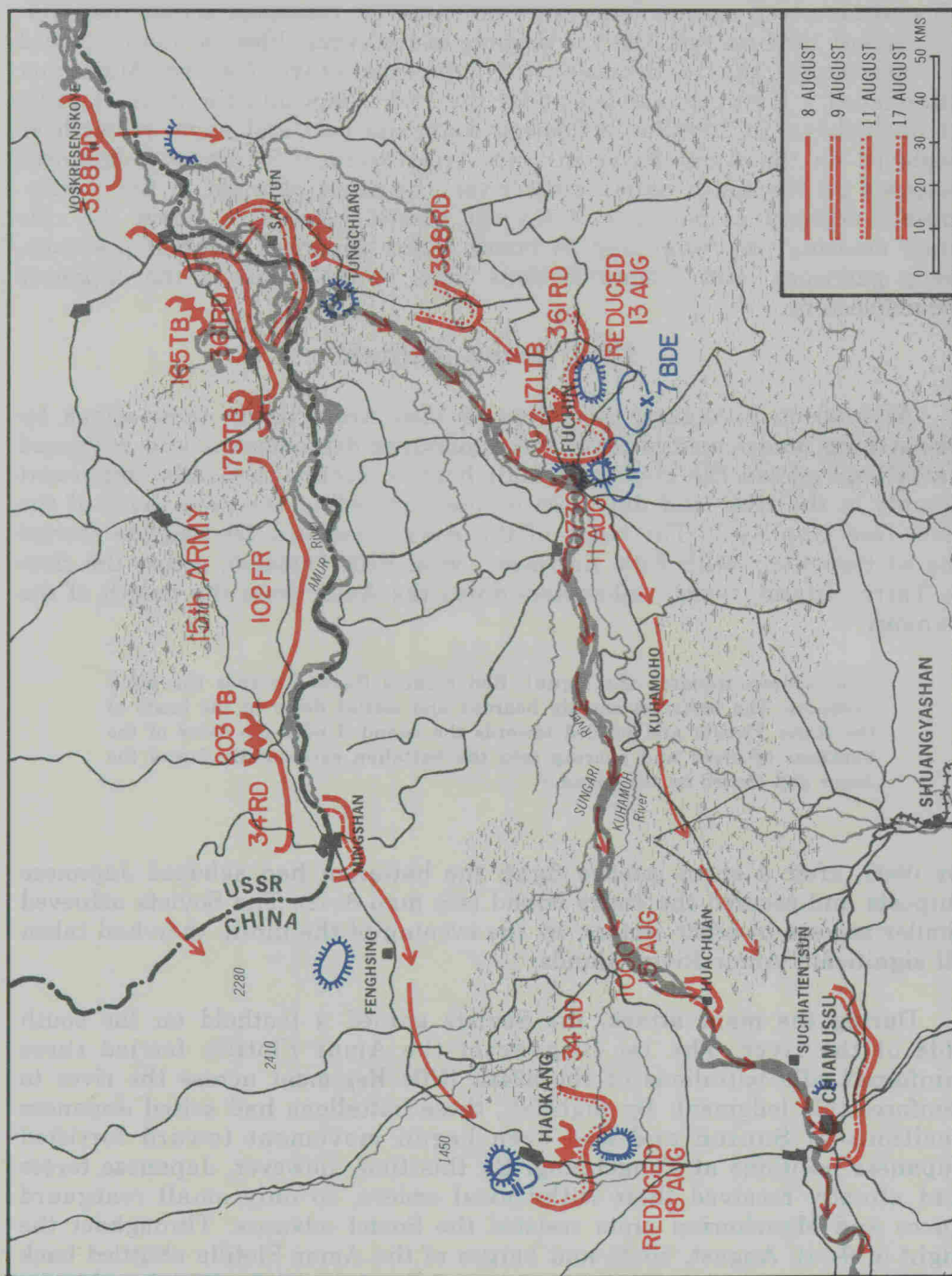
15th Army Attack

At 0100 on 9 August, the forces of 15th Army began their attack by dispatching border guards units, reconnaissance detachments, and advanced battalions across the river by small boat to secure tactically important islands in the river and Japanese outposts guarding the area south of the river (see map 8—1). The boats of the Amur Flotilla's 1st Brigade carried the 2d Battalion, 394th Rifle Regiment, 361st Rifle Division, across the river to Tartar Island, twenty kilometers down the Amur from the mouth of the Sungari.

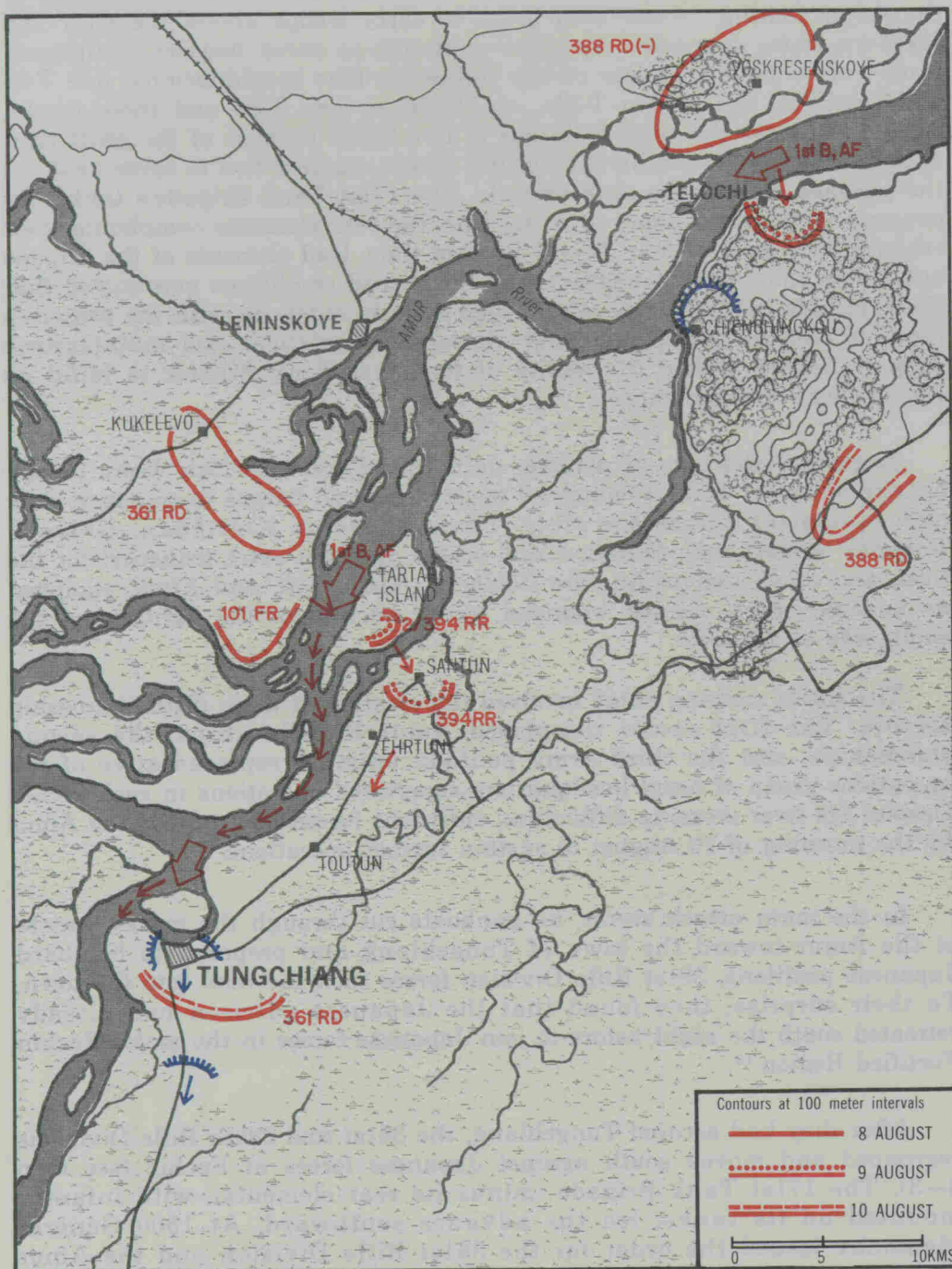
The soldiers awaited the signal. Red rockets flashed across the pitch darkness. The battalion silently boarded and settled down in the boats of the Amur Flotilla and headed towards the island. Under the cover of the darkness of night and pouring rain the battalion successfully forced the Amur and landed on the island.¹²

By 0800, after a short intense fight, the battalion had subdued Japanese outposts and secured the entire island (see map 8—2). The Soviets achieved similar success in other sectors; by the evening of the ninth, they had taken all significant Amur River islands.

During the main attack, the Soviets gained a foothold on the south side of the river. The 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla ferried three reinforced rifle battalions of the 394th Rifle Regiment across the river to reinforce this lodgment. By nightfall, these battalions had seized Japanese positions at Santun and had even begun movement toward fortified Japanese positions at Tungchiang. By this time, however, Japanese forces had already received their withdrawal orders, so only small rearguard forces and Manchurian units resisted the Soviet advance. Throughout the night of 9—10 August, boats and barges of the Amur Flotilla shuttled back and forth, transporting the main force of the 361st Rifle Division and its rear service units across the river between Santun and Tungchiang. On the 361st Rifle Division's left flank, two rifle regiments of the 388th Rifle Division also crossed to the south bank of the river.¹³



Map 8-1. 15th Army Operations, 9-17 August 1945



Map 8-2. The Assault Across the Amur River, 9-10 August

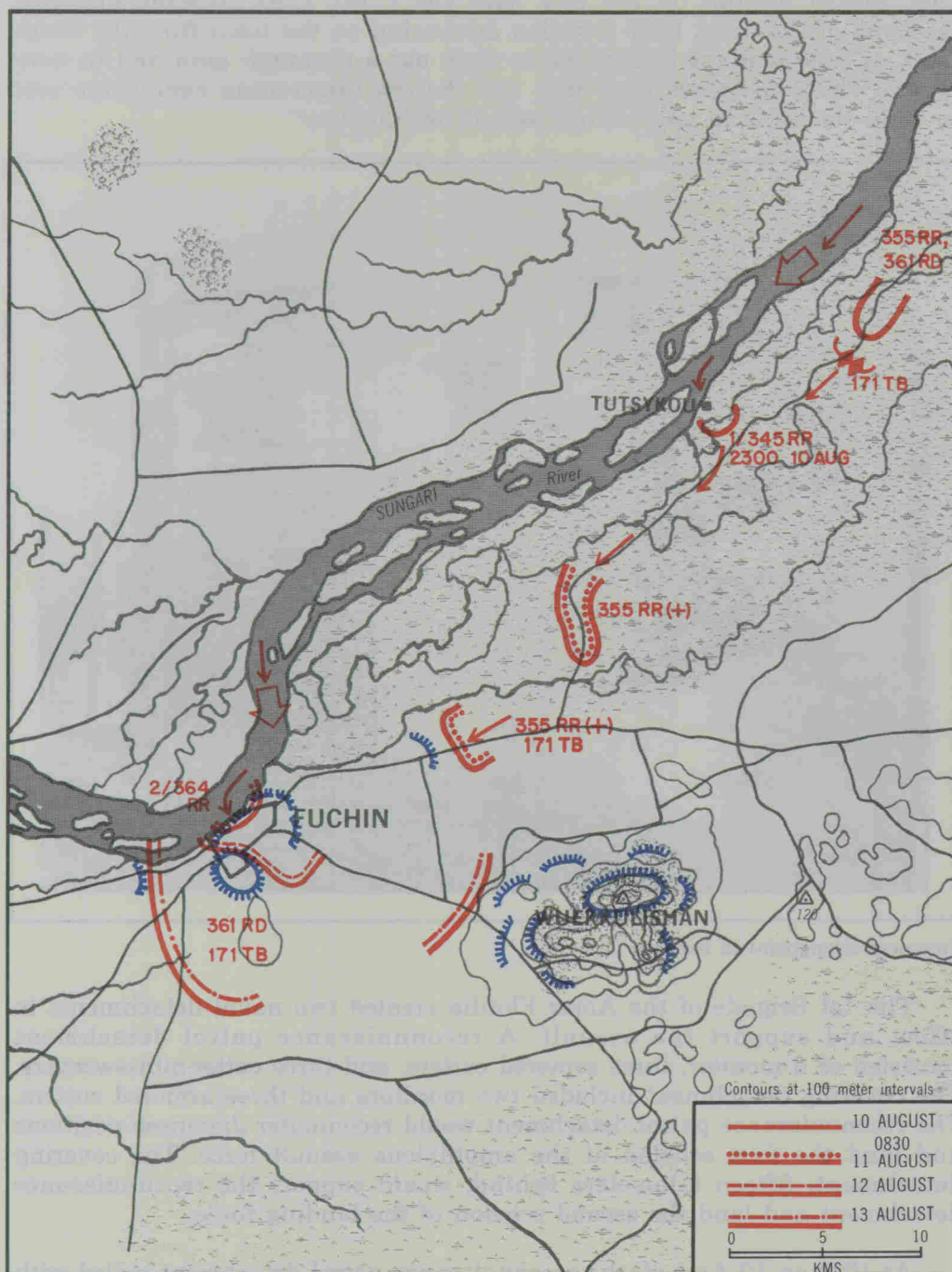
Crossing operations were a major responsibility of the 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla, which used boats to carry troops across the river and sixty-ton rafts supported by three pontoons to carry heavier equipment. Each raft could carry one of the following four combinations: one T-34 and two T-26 tanks, two T-34s, six T-26s, or one T-34 and three trucks. Each run across the river took four to five hours because of the swift river currents. Moreover, the limited rafting assets required two to three days for the passage of a single tank brigade. The 171st Tank Brigade's tanks, for example, took thirty hours to cross, with the rear elements completing their crossing in a total of four days.¹⁴ By that time, lead elements of the brigade were more than 100 kilometers away. Poor road conditions guaranteed that the brigade's rear elements would take days to catch up with the brigade's forward elements. The resulting absence of logistical and maintenance support further limited the ability of the 171st Tank Brigade to fulfill its role of forward detachment.

A general shortage of pontoon units also forced the 15th Army to rely heavily on Amur River commercial steamships and barges to transport men and equipment across the river. The steamships *Astrakhan*, *Groznyi*, *Donbass*, *Kokkinanki*, *Sormovo*, and others provided extra transport for the fleet, and other steamships, the *Chicherin*, *Ostrovskii*, and *Kirov*, equipped as hospital ships, carried wounded troops back from the fighting on the south side of the river.

The entire crossing effort involved the creation of three distinct crossing sectors. The first sector comprised Amur Flotilla ships, the second steamships, and the third army pontoon units. A representative of the operations group of army headquarters supervised operations in each sector. Despite the river crossing difficulties, sufficient forces had crossed the Amur by the morning of 10 August to sustain further operations.¹⁵

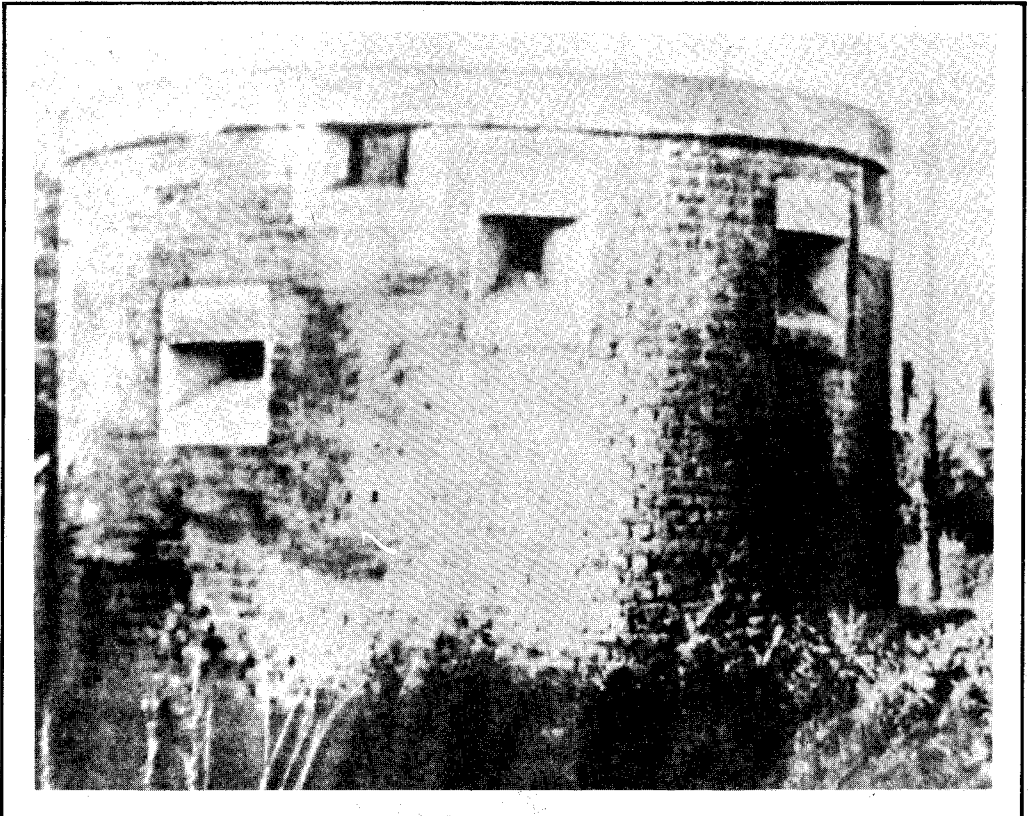
In the main attack sector, as gunboats cut through the murky waters of the Amur toward the town of Tungchiang and prepared to bombard Japanese positions, 361st Rifle Division forces took the road into the town. To their surprise, they found that the Japanese garrison had already retreated south the night before to join Japanese forces in the major Fuchin Fortified Region.¹⁶

After they had secured Tungchiang, the 361st and 388th Rifle Divisions regrouped and moved south against Japanese forces at Fuchin (see map 8—3). The 171st Tank Brigade (minus its rear elements), with infantry mounted on its tanks, led the advance southward. At 1500 General Mamonov issued the order for the 361st Rifle Division and the Amur Flotilla to advance on Fuchin and to secure the city by 0800 on 11 August. He ordered the 361st Rifle Division and 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla to land two reinforced rifle battalions and an assault rifle company on the right (east) bank of the Sungari near Fuchin. These units would make a



Map 8-3. The Battle of Fuchin, 10-13 August

coordinated assault on the city with the 171st Tank Brigade and lead elements of the 361st Rifle Division advancing on the town from the north. Lack of time made it impossible to work out a thorough plan and to write orders. Thus, all orders were oral, and the few intervening hours were used to train the units in amphibious assault techniques.¹⁷



Japanese strongpoint at Fuchin

The 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla created two naval detachments to effect and support the assault. A reconnaissance patrol detachment consisted of a monitor, three armored cutters, and three cutter-minesweepers. The covering detachment included two monitors and three armored cutters. The reconnaissance patrol detachment would reconnoiter Japanese positions and land the first echelon of the amphibious assault force. The covering detachment, fifteen kilometers behind, would support the reconnaissance detachment and land the second echelon of the landing force.

At 1630 on 10 August, the reconnaissance patrol detachment sailed with the 3d Battalion, 364th Rifle Regiment, 361st Rifle Division, on board the monitor *Sun Yat Sen*, and with the assault company on the three armored cutters. Carrying the 1st Battalion, 345th Rifle Regiment, the Amur Flotilla covering detachment departed three hours later. During the seventy-kilometer

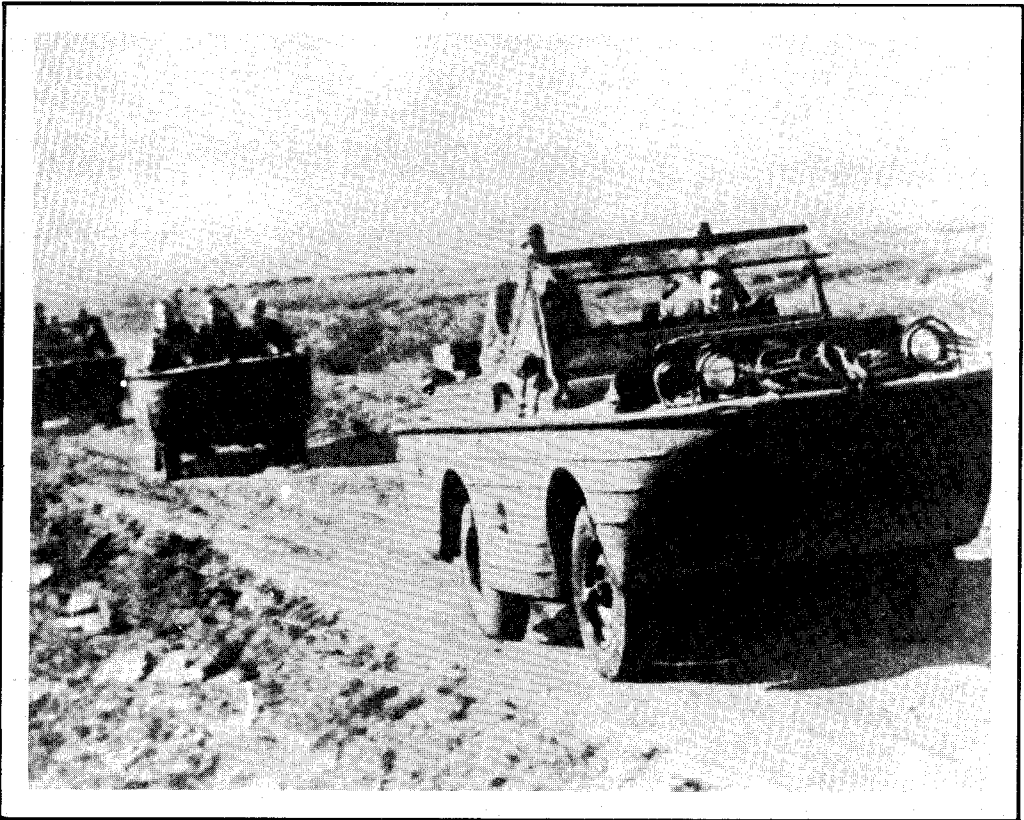
journey upriver, the Soviet ships' lookouts watched for mines and river obstacles. Fortunately for the force, the Japanese, in their hasty withdrawal to Fuchin, did not have time to sow mines or other obstacles in the river.¹⁸

At 2200 on 10 August, the detachments reached Tutsykou, thirty-seven kilometers north of Fuchin, dropped anchor, and landed the 1st Battalion, 345th Rifle Regiment. The armored cutters set off south to reconnoiter the river channel near Fuchin and the Japanese firing points covering the river. The cutters searched the channel and found it clear of mines. Darkness, however, prevented their discovering the configuration of the Japanese defenses. Also because of darkness, the Japanese in turn failed to detect the cutters, which returned without incident to Tutsykou. Based on this reconnaissance, the landing force commander (361st Rifle Division commander) ordered the 1st Battalion, 345th Rifle Regiment, on shore to join lead elements of the 361st Rifle Division and to approach Fuchin by land.¹⁹ The second battalion and the assault company would conduct an amphibious assault at dawn on the city of Fuchin in coordination with the advancing ground force.

At 0700 on 11 August, the three armored cutters and minesweepers, followed by the monitors, approached Fuchin. Twenty minutes later the cutters opened fire on Japanese positions. The Japanese returned heavy fire with mortars, artillery, and machine guns, but effectiveness was limited because the Japanese lacked weapons larger than 75-mm. The 130-mm guns of the Soviet monitors *Krasnyi Vostok*, *Lenin*, and *Sun Yat Sen*, and the multiple rocket launchers of the armored cutters systematically silenced the outgunned Japanese firing positions. The monitors destroyed five concrete and twelve wooden pillboxes, six mortar batteries, and several ammunition warehouses, and the armored cutters destroyed another ten firing points with direct naval gunfire. During the one-hour artillery duel, the armored cutters also landed the assault company, and at 0830 the entire 3d Battalion, 364th Rifle Regiment, landed from the monitor *Sun Yat Sen*. These units secured the immediate shoreline and moved toward the city. On the outskirts of the city, the landing party met heavy Japanese fire and counterattacks, which they repelled with the aid of heavy gunfire from the monitors. Only the timely arrival of lead elements of the 171st Tank Brigade and the 361st Rifle Division's ground forces from the north finally broke the determined Japanese resistance. After 0900, the Japanese withdrew into the fortified military settlement in the southwest sector of Fuchin and into the Wuerhkuli Shan Fortified Region, in the hills southeast of the city. Fighting for the fortified camp continued on into the twelfth.

The Japanese strongly fortified the town, as part of the Fuchin Fortified Region, creating in its outskirts permanent firing positions. In rock buildings they established pillboxes, and around the town they erected metal watch-towers on which, at a height of 20 meters, they built armored cupolas with embrasures for all around firing of heavy machine guns. The town and fortified region was defended by the 2d Battalion of the Sungari Naval Flotilla infantry regiment, the 25th Security Battalion, and other subunits and attachments of Manchurian troops.²⁰

Tankers of the 171st Tank Brigade and infantry men of the 361st Rifle Division slowly cleared the town in house-to-house fighting. By noon on 11 August, the 171st Tank Brigade, with a battalion of the 355th Rifle Regiment, 361st Rifle Division, had occupied the center of the city. That night the Japanese launched several unsuccessful counterattacks. New Soviet attacks supported by monitors had only limited success the next day. Finally, on 13 August the main body of the 171st Tank Brigade and 361st Rifle Division arrived in Fuchin to join the fray. By the evening of the thirteenth, Japanese resistance had ended in the city, although Japanese forces continued to hold out on the hilly fortress southeast of town. With Fuchin in Soviet hands, General Mamonov marched on to Chiamussu.



Soviet amphibious vehicles of the 2d Far Eastern Front

While the main attack drove up the Sungari, secondary Soviet attacks plunged forward on the flanks of 15th Army. On 9 August the 34th Rifle Division and 203d Tank Brigade crossed the Amur River on the right flank. The next day they advanced south along the Lopei-Chiamussu road. The 34th Rifle Division left forces behind to blockade the Japanese fortified positions at Fenghsiang, while the main body moved south over water-soaked roads and invested the major fortified position at Hsingshanchen.

Heavy Soviet air and artillery bombardment at Hsingshanchen ultimately forced the Japanese to withdraw into the hills west of the fortified region or south to Chiamussu. By the thirteenth, the advanced elements of 34th Rifle Division had pushed slowly south toward Japanese positions at Lienchiangkou, covering the north bank of the Sungari River across from Chiamussu.²¹

On the army's left, the 630th Rifle Regiment of the 388th Rifle Division cooperated with the 2d Brigade of the Amur Flotilla in order to capture Japanese defenses on the south bank of the Amur River southwest of Khabarovsk.²² The most important of these Japanese positions was the town of Fuyuan. Destruction of these Japanese garrisons would insure safe, continuous Soviet use of the river. At 0320 on 9 August, the gunship *Proletarii*, the 2d Detachment of Armored Cutters, and the 3d Detachment of Minesweepers left Nizhne-Spasskoye, carrying on their decks the 1st Battalion, 630th Rifle Regiment. The monitors *Sverdlov* and *Dal'nevostochnyi Komsomolets*, and the 3d Detachment of Armored Cutters took up firing positions near Malankin Island in order to support the landing at Fuyuan.

As the amphibious troops and ships approached, the monitors and cutters opened fire on Japanese firing positions of the Fuyuan Fortified Region. Landing parties went ashore near the wharves at the west and east ends of the city. Initially, the unsuspecting Japanese did not resist, but as the 1st Battalion, 630th Rifle Regiment, advanced, Japanese resistance stiffened. Soviet Yak-9 aircraft of the 307th Fighter Aviation Regiment provided air cover until it was clear that no Japanese aircraft would intercede. Closer to the center of the city, two detachments of Soviet sailors went ashore to support the 1st Battalion of the 630th Rifle Regiment. By 0800 Japanese resistance had ceased.

Having secured the city, a portion of the 1st Battalion, 630th Rifle Regiment, remained as a garrison, while the rest of the unit embarked once again aboard ship. This time the 2d Brigade of the Amur Flotilla would move upstream toward the mouth of the Sungari, reducing the three Japanese positions at Chinteli, Otu, and Kaintsi. En route, the brigade picked up the 2d Battalion, 630th Rifle Regiment. When the brigade arrived at Chinteli, at 1000 on 10 August, it found the city already in Soviet hands, having fallen to the crew of an armored cutter and several soldiers who had crossed the river and secured the town on their own initiative the night before. After picking up the 3d Battalion, 630th Rifle Regiment, at the village of Pokrovskoye, the brigade moved on to Otu, only to find it also in Soviet hands. Continuing upriver, the brigade reached Kaintsi at 1925 on 10 August. The monitor *Sverdlov* and three armored cutters landed parties at the mouth of the Kaintsi River, while the monitor *Dal'nevostochnyi Komsomolets* landed a rifle company north of Kaintsi village. Once again most Japanese had already withdrawn from the village on the ninth. The few that remained fled after hearing the first salvo of rockets from the armored cutters.

Thus, by the end of the tenth, the 630th Rifle Regiment and 2d Brigade of the Amur Flotilla had cleared the entire south bank of the Amur of Japanese for 200 kilometers from Khabarovsk to the mouth of the Sungari River. The 2d Brigade of the Amur Flotilla left garrisons behind in each of the towns taken from the Japanese. The brigade also transported the support echelons of 15th Army across the Amur at Leninskoye. Having finished the task by 13 August, the command group of the Amur Flotilla, then en route up the Sungari River to Fuchin, ordered the 2d Brigade to reinforce the 1st Brigade. It also ordered a battalion of gunboats and a detachment of armored cutters from the Ussuri naval force and a battalion of armored cutters, the monitor *Aktivnyi*, and the gunboat *Krasnaya Zvezda* from the Zee-Bureisk Brigade to join the 1st Brigade at Fuchin. This concentrated naval power would compensate for the flooded terrain obstacle that would slow down Soviet ground forces on the south bank of the Sungari.

Faced with the sudden Soviet attack, the Japanese First Area Army, as early as the evening of the ninth ordered the 134th Infantry Division to fall back on Chiamussu and, if necessary, to Fengsang. By the twelfth the bulk of the 134th Infantry Division was at Chiamussu, leaving only a rear guard and Manchurian units to defend in the fortified regions. After the Soviets had taken Fuchin and advanced on Chiamussu, the 134th assigned the defense of Chiamussu to the 7th Manchurian Infantry Brigade and withdrew up the Sungari River to Fengsang.²³

At Fuchin on the thirteenth, the commanders of the 1st Brigade of the Amur Flotilla and the 361st Rifle Division considered an advance on Chiamussu. High water made the few roads along the south bank of the Sungari treacherous. Maintaining a road for even a limited offensive would take considerable engineer work. Complicating matters, fuel shortages hindered the movement of the 171st Tank Brigade. Facing these problems, the respective commanders selected amphibious operations to secure Chiamussu, specifically a series of landings along the Sungari in order to threaten Japanese withdrawal routes and to facilitate the advance of the division's main force moving overland along the road network south of the river. Rear Adm. N. V. Antonov ordered the 1st and 2d Brigades of the Amur Flotilla to land assault detachments at Chiamussu and to cooperate with ground units of 15th Army in securing Chiamussu by 15 August:

the 1st Brigade would land one reinforced battalion at Kekhoma [Kuhomo Ho] and Sansinchen [Hsincheng], 85 kilometers and 70 kilometers below Chiamussu, to secure the towns and support the movement of the battalions along the shore and the seizure of Chiamussu. The 2d Brigade would follow the ships of the 1st Brigade and land the 632d Rifle Regiment in the immediate vicinity of Chiamussu.²⁴

At 0535 on 14 August, ships of the 1st Brigade, with two battalions of the 349th Rifle Regiment, 361st Rifle Division, and a mixed detachment of the 83d Rifle Regiment, 34th Rifle Division, headed upriver toward the two

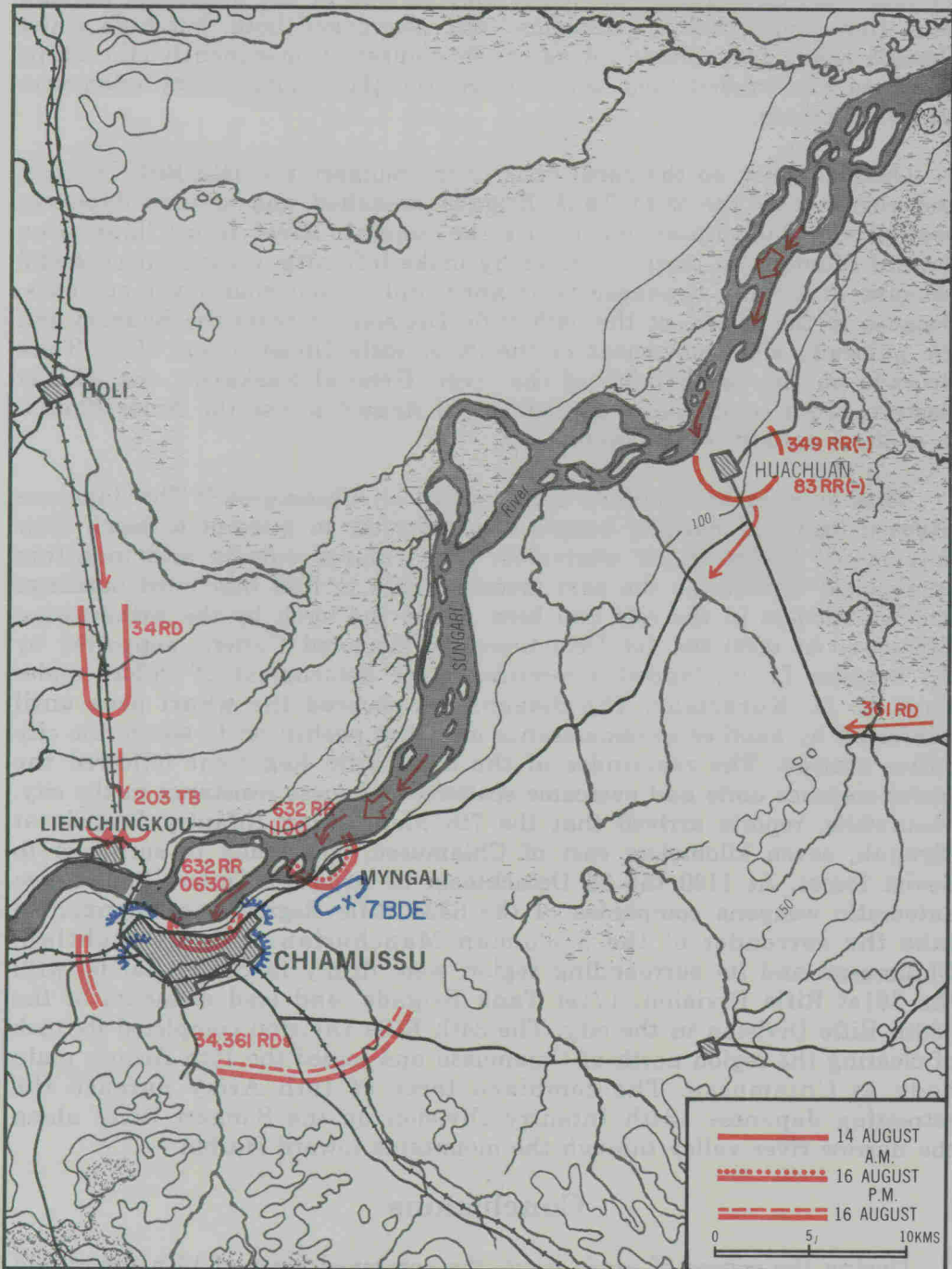
landing sites (see map 8—4). When they arrived at the appointed landing sites, they found that the Japanese had abandoned both, but high water blocked roads from those towns to Chiamussu. Consequently, the ships sailed on and landed their troops at Sustun [Huachuan], forty kilometers from Chiamussu.

On 14 August, on the north bank of the Sungari, the 34th Rifle Division and elements of the 203d Tank Brigade assaulted and secured Japanese positions at Lienchiangkou, across the Sungari River from Chiamussu. Several attempts to cross the river by makeshift rafts proved unsuccessful because of strong Japanese resistance and treacherous river currents. Because of the failure of the 34th Rifle Division to cross the Sungari and the painfully slow movement of the 361st Rifle Division and 171st Tank Brigade on the south bank of the river, General Purkayev, the 2d Far Eastern Front commander, decided on 15 August to use the Amur Flotilla in a direct assault on Chiamussu.

That evening the flotilla's ships moved on Chiamussu.²⁵ The Japanese released logs and burning barges into the river to attempt to block their movement. Dodging the obstacles, the armored cutters and monitors approached Chiamussu the next morning, only to find that most buildings and warehouses in the city had been put to the torch by the withdrawing Japanese. At 0630 the 1st Detachment of Armored Cutters, supported by the monitor *Lenin*, landed a reconnaissance detachment of sailors under Capt. S. M. Kuznetsov. The detachment secured the wharf area until reinforced by another reconnaissance unit that pushed on to secure the city police station. The remainder of the 632d Rifle Regiment followed the reconnaissance units and overcame scattered Japanese resistance in the city. Meanwhile, reports arrived that the 7th Manchurian Infantry Brigade at Myngali, seven kilometers east of Chiamussu, was ready to surrender to Soviet forces. At 1100 the 3d Detachment of Armored Cutters landed two automatic weapons companies of the 632d Rifle Regiment at Myngali to take the surrender of the 3,500-man Manchurian unit. By nightfall, Chiamussu and its surrounding region were firmly in Soviet hands, with the 361st Rifle Division, 171st Tank Brigade, and lead elements of the 388th Rifle Division in the city. The 34th Rifle Division completed its task of clearing the region north of Chiamussu and joined the 15th Army's main body at Chiamussu. The combined force of 15th Army pursued the retreating Japanese 134th Infantry Division up the Sungari River along the narrow river valley through the mountains toward Harbin.

Conclusions

During the course of seven days, the combined force of 15th Army and the Amur Flotilla had crossed the Amur River and advanced 210 kilometers to Chiamussu, at a rate of thirty kilometers per day over appalling terrain. Within nine days the flotilla had transported 91,000 men, 150 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 413 artillery pieces, along with 3,000 horses and



Map 8-4. The Fall of Chiamussu, 14-16 August

28,000 tons of supplies across the Amur.²⁷ The ships of the flotilla with amphibious detachments represented the advanced guard of the front and fulfilled the role of forward detachment as well. Operating far ahead of the main force, ships and amphibious forces overcame the exceptional terrain difficulties and generated the high tempo of advance in the region. By timely application of their limited combat power, they maintained pressure on withdrawing Japanese units and, in doing so, secured the key Japanese fortified points in the region. The operations of the Amur Flotilla and 15th Army form a classic case study of joint amphibious operations, operations that successfully overcome extreme terrain obstacles. Much of the operation's success resulted from the close coordination of the flotilla and the ground force and the ability of commanders to adapt to the changing conditions in the area of operations. The initiative of these commanders maintained the momentum of the offensive until its successful conclusion.

Notes

1. Bōeichō, *Senshi sōsho*, 438; JM 154, sketch no. 2, map no. 2, chart 3, gives 134th Infantry Division strength as 14,056 men; S. E. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi tikhookeanskii flot* [Red Banner Pacific Ocean Fleet] (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1973), 206.
2. *IVMV*, 2:200.
3. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 97.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Zakharov, *Final: istoriko*, 400; Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 109; Sidorov, "Boevoe," 15.
6. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 125; Krupchenko, *Sovetskie*, 320.
7. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 117.
8. *Ibid.*, 132; *IVMV*, 2:208.
9. V. N. Bagrov and N. F. Sungorkin, *Krasno-znamennaia amurskaia flotiliia* (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1976), 155–57.
10. *Ibid.*, 149–50.
11. *Ibid.*, 151.
12. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 230, claims the Soviets overcame light Japanese resistance on Tartar Island. Other sources deny any resistance.
13. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 203–4; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 159–60; Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 230.
14. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 231–32.
15. Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 167–68.
16. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 203–4; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 160; Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 233, mentions a "two hour bloody struggle" for Tungchiang.
17. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 206–7.
18. *Ibid.*; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 178–79.
19. Accounts of the assault on Fuchin are found in Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 233–35; Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 206–10; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 179–83.
20. Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 234.
21. *Ibid.*, 232–33; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 185.

22. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 204—6; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 161—66.
23. JM 154, 9, 61, 63.
24. Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 210.
25. Details of the Chiamussu operation are from Vnotchenko, *Pobeda*, 235; Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamennyi*, 210—11; Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 185—87.
26. Bagrov and Sungorkin, *Krasno*, 168.